

Nobody Asked Me, But.....

Well it has been a rather cool Summer with lower than average humidity which has made it really nice, but now that I've put a curse on the Summer weather pattern let's see what else I can mess up.

The economy, no I don't believe that I can mess it up any worse than it is or will be when the folks in Washington finish, however, I will say that I can remember back in 1981 when things were very similar. I had recently graduated from college and went to work in Alabama at a large wholesale nursery just outside Gadsden. Unemployment was in the double digits and Alabama had the highest unemployment in the nation and, of course, the town I moved to had the highest unemployment rate in the state, thus making it the most depressed city in the country.

The two major industries

in the town were Goodyear Tire Plant and Republic Steel. That was "back in the day" when we still had steel plants in the US, also referred to as the "BC" era (Before Chinese imports).

Twenty-eight years later, wow, I guess I am getting old, we are at similar crossroads. The exception is the interest rates, which are at all time lows as compared to double digit highs in the early 80's.

Most of my employees were not even born during these times and cannot even imagine the devastating effects high interest rates have on businesses and personal lives.

So I look at it this way, we all made it through the 80's and we will pull through this downturn as well. Oh, and remember, it could be worse if we were in the auto, boating, or construction industry instead of the nursery industry.

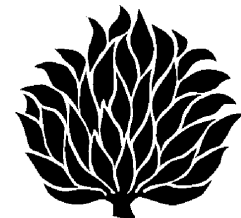
So everyday I count my blessings that I'm part of a

great industry that won't just survive but will thrive in the days ahead. We have products that in my opinion, yes I do have one, will only become more sought after in the future as the green movement and green infrastructure concepts strengthen over the next decade and beyond.

Our biggest challenge now and in the future is finding a means to increase the perceived value of plants. Folks are willing to spend \$3-\$5 on a cup of coffee, but complain about the \$5 price tag of a plant that can last a lifetime!

Enjoy the rest of your Summer and best wishes for a successful Fall!

Doug



FEATURE PLANT

Azalea-Evergreen 'Conversation Piece'

Conversation Piece is this issue's feature plant. This gorgeous, showy Robin Hill hybrid has mostly pink and white flowers with red and white blotches. This azalea is my absolute favorite by far. The truly unique flowers have light throats and bloom late season alongside the Sat-suki azaleas.

This variety is hardy down to 0 degrees and has a large, loose growth habit. Plants are typically 2' tall x 2 1/2' wide at its maturity. Although a lot of azaleas have a potentially large number of pest and disease problems, this variety is tough as nails and is very disease resistant.

We currently offer this plant in #1, #2, and #3 containers. Be sure and try a few on your next order with us. They are guaranteed to be a customer pleaser!!



A CUSTOMER

"A customer is the most important visitor on our premises. His is not dependent on us—we are dependent on him. His is not an outsider in our business—he is part of it. We are not doing him a favor by serving him—he is doing us a favor by giving us the opportunity to do so."

—Author Unknown

REMINDERS! REMINDERS!

- It's now time to start thinking about your Fall orders. The 2009/2010 catalogue was mailed out a few weeks ago, so hopefully you have all received one by now. We are currently confirming orders for Fall in the order they are received. Inventory and availability is at its greatest in the Fall of the year so do not wait. Call us if you need assistance in putting your orders together, and remember that we are always more than happy to duplicate your previous year's order at your request.
- 2010 Rose reminders and order forms were also mailed out a few weeks ago. You should have also gotten a fax reminder as well. Keep in mind that we are once again pre-booking 100% of our Roses. The deadline for placing your 2010 Rose orders is October 15, 2009. We have added several new patented hybrid teas, grandifloras, and floribundas to our 2010 list including selections from the Jackson & Perkins Ultimate Rose Collection, which are only available to retail garden centers. We will continue growing the knockout varieties. Order early for best availability.

We have a gorgeous new crop of #3 Azaleas and #3 Rhododendrons ready now! Don't let your inventory run out and your green goods area look empty. Keep your store looking fresh and well stocked throughout the Summer with beautiful plants.

TEN CUSTOMER SERVICE TIPS THAT WILL KEEP THEM COMING BACK

By Liz Tahir, International Marketing Consultant

1. Remember there is no way that the quality of customer service can exceed the quality of the people who provide it.
2. Realize that your people will treat your customer the way they are treated.
3. Do you know who your customers are? If a regular customer came in to your facility, would you recognize them?
4. Do your customers know who you are? If they see you, would they recognize you?
5. For good customer service, go the extra mile.
6. Are your customers greeted when they walk in the door or at least within 30 to 40 seconds upon entering?
7. Give customers the benefit of the doubt.
8. If a customer makes a request for something special, do everything you can to say yes.
9. Are your customer service associates properly trained in how to handle a customer complaint or an irate person?
10. Want to know what your customers think of your company? ASK THEM!

TIPS FOR KEEPING YOUR CRAPES AND ROSES LOOKING GORGEOUS ALL SUMMER LONG!

To keep your Roses looking great until the first frost try the following:

*In a wet weather pattern, spray Roses every 7-10 days to fight fungal problems. We highly recommend Immunex, a systemic fungicide by Spectracide. Our second choice is Daconil, or you can even combine them. In dryer conditions, you should only have to use Immunex and/or Daconil every 14-21 days.

Pointer for keeping your Crape Myrtles showing color all Summer long:

*Flowers form at the tips of the new growth on Crape Myrtles. Extra shoots can be encouraged by pruning just below the flower after it begins to fade. A second flush of small blooms should appear within a few weeks!

CRAPE MYRTLE TRIVIA

A note about the flowers on Dynamite and Red Rocket Crape Myrtles. Dr. Carl Whitcomb, who patented these varieties says that if you open a young flower bud on either of these plants **the petals inside will be WHITE.** The RED pigment is fixed in a very brief period after opening (as little as 15 to 30 minutes). He says that if the flowers open on a cloudy morning, they will be a distinctly lighter color. By the same token, if the plants are loaded on a truck one day and then delivered the next day to a customer the flowers that opened in the absence of light will be white or pink. **This is NOT a problem as the next flowers that open in full sun will be cherry red.** He goes on to say that also both **Dynamite** and **Red Rocket** will occasionally produce a flower(s) with some white on the outer portion of the petals. This is perfectly normal during cool or cloudy periods.

Dr. Whitcomb also says that Crape Myrtles are **EXTREMELY** sensitive to Roundup. Roundup drift so slight that there are no leaf symptoms at all will discolor flowers on **Dynamite** and **Red Rocket** and many other varieties. **Dynamites** that are exposed to the slightest whiff of Roundup will produce flowers mostly white or pink for several weeks following, then slowly the red colors will return.

DEATH OF A SALE

Sure-Fire Ways to Send Your Customers Running Empty Handed For The Exit

Excerpts taken from Green Profit, 8/08 by Chris Beytes

Have you ever wondered what it is that employees do to tick off customers. Well wonder no more. A panel of experts in the retail industry was assembled and asked this very question and here's a little of what they had to say.

***LACK OF RESPECT**-A fundamental of customer service is showing respect for the person you're serving. Without customers, there is no business, and without a business, you've got no job. Many sales associates look at customers as an interruption to their work instead of a reason for it.

***NOT LISTENING**-You were given two ears and one mouth-use them in that ratio. Listen twice as much as you talk. Always follow the customer's lead. They will tell you what they want to know and how much they want to know. Study their eyes, watch body language.

***NOT ASKING QUESTIONS**-Asking questions will quickly reveal your customer's needs, requirements and expertise level. The key to this is that you must ask the right questions and enough questions to be able to properly advise them.

***NOT PUTTING CUSTOMERS FIRST**-The customer must come first. Nobody likes to be ignored or kept waiting. If your garden center is understaffed, find ways to juggle responsibilities with another employee, or just be ready to drop what you're doing to help someone. Give them your full attention.

***A BAD ATTITUDE**-Keep smiling, no matter what. Your job is to make customers feel great about coming to your business to shop. They have their own problems, and a visit to a garden center should help them forget. They don't care about your troubles and shouldn't have to.

***NOT THANKING YOUR CUSTOMERS FOR COMING IN, EVEN IF THEY DIDN'T BUY**-Customers don't buy every time they come into your store but they still want to know you noticed them. The worst thing that stores can do is take their customers for granted. They are not just dollars signs with feet attached. They have money and they can and will shop elsewhere!

NEWS FROM THE NURSERY

It is hard to believe that it is already the middle of July. It seems like just yesterday we were gearing up for the Spring shipping season. We have been blessed thus far to have had a decent year in terms of weather and sales all things considered. Temperatures have been in the upper 50's to mid 60's at night and averaging low to mid 80's during the day with only a handful of 90 degree days. This is the complete opposite of what we dealt with last year. In terms of rainfall, we are not in bad shape at all either. At last check, I believe we are only down by about 1 1/2 inches for the year.

Most of you by now have spoken to the newest member of our team here at Buds & Blooms. Josh Torn, whom you may have guessed is Doug's son. Josh came to us in late February after graduating from UNC Chapel Hill (Go Tarheels!) in December of 2008. He has been a tremendous help to us this Spring. Josh's role is customer service/sales. This Spring was definitely a learning experience for him, and we believe that he has done well, and could be on his way to becoming a true nurseryman down the road just like his dad. You never know!

This Summer things have been pretty laid back for us. I took a few days off and went to Myrtle Beach with my husband for a little rest and relaxation. We thoroughly enjoyed ourselves, and I didn't want to come home. Everyone got to take a whole week off during the 4th of July or the week after. We alternated crews and office staff so that someone would be here both weeks. It was great

to see everyone get some well deserved time away and come back refreshed and recharged.

Doug finally took a couple of weeks off at the end of June to be with his family and has tried to go fishing a few times as well in between burning the candle at both ends here.

We even had a picnic out at the lake that is not too far from the nursery a couple of weeks ago. Doug brought his boat and inner tubes and we feasted on pork shoulder, fried chicken, and all the fixin's. A good time was had by all!

*I hope you have a wonderful
Fall!*

Crystal

Come By And Visit Us At The Summer Trade Shows!

PANTS Show July 28-30, 2009

Oaks, PA (Booth # 7039)

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NCNLA Green & Growin' Show

August 13-14, 2009, Greensboro, NC

(Booth #'s 119 & 121)